

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation. The motivation for this decision is clear: Kerry has come out against media consolidation in broadcasting markets, which Sinclair among others has lobbied for, and Sinclair's decision is not only revenge-motivated but also reeks of partisan political manipulation.

The press is a powerful tool that should not be allowed to participate in forcing its own financial agendas through content manipulation. The "documentary" in question is produced by a conservative group with pro-Bush political agendas and as such is simply a political ad. Grey areas along these lines should induce the FCC to require Sinclair to air a countering documentary produced by an opposing political group before its license is renewed, and the company should be fined for this baldfaced corruption of its supposedly non-partisan compliance with FCC regulations.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies control the airwaves, we get more of what's good for the bottom line and less of what we need for our democracy. Instead of something produced at "News Central" far away, it's more important that we see real people from our own communities and more substantive news about issues that matter.

Sinclair's actions show why we need to strengthen media ownership rules, not weaken them. They show why the license renewal process needs to involve more than a returned postcard. Thank you.